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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003161

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SOCIAL ACTIVISTS PUSH FOR CROSS-SECTARIAN
INITIATIVES

REF: BAGHDAD 3121

Classified By: COL Kenneth Fisher, Deputy PRT Team Leader, for reasons
1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Iraqiyya member Saad Al Janabi (elected to the CoR but deprived of his seat at the behest of the De-Ba'athification Commission) has been working to relieve sectarian tensions through community meetings and provision of basic essentials. Currently working in Adhamiya, Kadhimyah, and Al Doura in Baghdad where there are significant sectarian tensions, Al Janabi's team, many of whom belong to his Iraqi Republican Group (IRG), meets with local clerics, influential individuals, political and tribal leaders, and youth in each area to establish personal connections between the Sunni and Shia groups. Additionally, through Al Janabi's personal financial resources, the IRG provides area residents with some basic essentials, such as blankets and bottled water. The IRG's theory is that sectarian tensions will alleviate naturally once Baghdad residents find jobs and municipal services return. The group purports that there is a growing disconnect between Iraq's elected leaders and the citizens of Baghdad and that only grassroots efforts will be effective in establishing an "Iraqi identity." IRG is the first multi-sectarian group to tackle the security situation on the local level, and as an organization, may represent one way for de-Ba'athified individuals to re-engage both politically and socially. Bio notes on Al Janabi in para 3. END SUMMARY.

IRG: WHO THEY ARE

12. (C) Saad Assim Ahmed Al Janabi introduced some of his Iraqi Republican Group (IRG) to POL and PRT offs at a lunch at his personal estate on August 27. In response to the recent sectarian tension and violence in Baghdad, the group has turned to social improvement initiatives, such as its recent work to alleviate the sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shia in urban Baghdad.

13. (C) BIO NOTE: Saad Al Janabi is a wealthy Iraqi disallowed from taking the Council of Representatives seat he won as a member of Iraqiyya for his alleged ties to the Baathist regime's intelligence services. His family's wealth, amassed from its 26-company strong construction contracting empire, has afforded him several palatial residences in Baghdad, a small media empire (including television and radio components), and place of influence in Baghdad. Pro-US and English-speaking, he is a longtime USG contact. He may also be an LPR or AmCit through marriage. END BIO NOTE.

14. (C) IRG's theory is that sectarian tensions will naturally dissolve in Baghdad once the employment situation improves

and municipal services return. They see the sectarian tensions and poor security situation as a result of the failing economy in Baghdad and believe that only a grassroots, Iraqi effort will solve the problem. They also purport that there is a growing disconnect between Iraqi's elected leaders and the citizens of Baghdad.

WHAT THEY DO

¶5. (C) Working in the divisive areas of Adhamiya, Kadhimyah, and Al Doura in Baghdad, IRG establishes personal relationships between area clerics, influential individuals, political and tribal leaders, and youth through meetings and discussions hosted at one of Al Janabi's expansive Baghdad estates or in the neighborhood itself. According to IRG, this personal approach is the only way that a true "Iraqi identity" will be established.

¶6. (C) IRG also works in these areas to provide basic essentials, such blankets and bottled water, and has call-in programs on Al Janabi's personal radio station to discuss issues in each area. IRG also has sub-teams that specialize in technical fields, i.e. medical, engineering, water.

COMMENT: WHY THEY ARE IMPORTANT

¶7. (C) Al Janabi is clearly the driving force behind IRG, and his investment of significant personal resources is likely his attempt to increase his political stature. It may be through organizations like IRG that de-Ba'athified individuals can establish a popular base and re-discover themselves both politically and socially.

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¶8. (C) That said, IRG is the first multi-sectarian group to tackle the security situation on the local level. Given its members' influence in various Baghdad communities, IRG could have significant access to and clout in several areas divided along sectarian lines. END COMMENT.
SPECKHARD